

UNITARIANISM IN SCOTLAND

BY ARCHIBALD MACWHIRTER, F.S.A.(SCOT.)

“UNITARIANS,” a name applied generally to all who maintain that God exists in one person only and specially to a small Christian sect whose distinguishing tenet is the Unity as opposed to the “Trinity of the Godhead.” This definition is quoted from Chambers Encyclopaedia, and a statement may be added from the voluminous work, “Faiths of the World,” published about a century ago—“Unitarians have no separate and settled creed to which they adhere as a body, and as a necessary consequence of that unfettered freedom of thought which each one claims for himself the utmost diversity of opinion prevails among them, not in minor points alone, but even in the most important doctrines of the gospel. This doctrine of the essential personal oneness of God is their rallying point amid all the differences which exist among them on other subjects.”

THE PENAL LAWS

Prior to 1813 Penal Laws applied to all avowed Unitarians. By the Act of Toleration passed in 1689 the exceptive clauses not only deprived of legal toleration all who should deny in preaching or writing the doctrine of the Trinity as contained in the 39 Articles but compelled all preachers to subscribe these Articles (excepting only the parts relating to Church Government and Ritual), so that Unitarians, like Roman Catholics were excluded. Nine years later a second Act penalised those “who by writing printing, teaching or advisedly speaking, shall deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God or shall maintain that there are more Gods than one.”

These laws debarred Unitarians from pleading in a Court of Justice, from acting as guardians of children, and from receiving a legacy, amongst other items; strict adherence to their doctrinal standpoint made them at different periods liable to fine, imprisonment, and even death.

Although by then a dead letter, these Acts still were in force when the London Unitarian Book Fund was formed in 1791, to be followed by the London Unitarian Fund in 1806. For 20 years a campaign was waged for repeal of the Penal Statutes which was supported by Mr. Fox, and on 21st July, 1813, the Act “To Relieve persons who impugn the doctrine of the Holy Trinity” became law.¹

¹ By this Act, similar measures passed by the Scots Parliaments of King Charles II. and King William also were repealed.

The passing of this Act brought a great upsurge of interest in Unitarianism. Many who hesitated to support a body which was outside the law now came forward with support, but generations were to pass before the stigma attached to the belief could be said to have abated.

Later, in 1825, the London Book Society and London Unitarian Fund were superseded by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association with which the Scottish Association Congregations always have been connected. Over a century later, in 1928, the B. & F. U. itself merged with the National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian and other Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations to form the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

To date, little has been published concerning the history of Unitarianism in Scotland, and in particular about congregations in this country. In this paper, I shall first trace the history of the Scottish Unitarian Association and afterwards give details of the various churches under its auspices, over twenty of which have existed from time to time. Through the courtesy of Mr. Kenneth M. Street of Lenzie and the S.U.A., I have had access to certain of the old Minute Books, but there are gaps in these and transactions during long periods are unrecorded. I have done my best to fill in the missing years from many other sources, and it is regretted that only in comparatively modern times did the Edinburgh Almanac include Unitarian lists. Moreover it is to be feared that the compilers of Statistical Accounts and historians of certain parishes either had no information concerning local Unitarians or quietly ignored their existence. These works do not supply the help that would be obtained in gathering history of more orthodox denominations.

Consequently, my main sources have been Unitarian records, and in this connection it will be understood that most of the statements quoted tend to be those of people looking at events through Unitarian eyes.

SCOTLAND

In 1792 the first Unitarian group to assemble in Scotland was formed in Montrose. This society was gathered by Wm. Christie, merchant, who had become convinced of the doctrines of Unitarianism through personal study. Mr. Christie was joined in 1793 by Rev. Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who previously had been an Anglican curate. Through a careful study of the doctrines, Mr. Palmer came to the conclusion that worship, as practiced by the Church of England was unscriptural. In 1795, Palmer came to Dundee and started a Unitarian society in that town, as well as conducting services for groups in Forfar and Arbroath.

Mr. Palmer was somewhat eccentric, and we learn that he used to

startle his congregation by using strong and unusual expressions. He is described as being a keen student of the scriptures, a man of action, and the person designed to become the apostle of Unitarianism in Scotland. It is unfortunate that Mr. Palmer did not confine himself to religious duties. Taking a keen interest in political concerns, he attended a meeting of "The Friends of the People"—a society which was interested in social and political reform in the days which followed the French revolution. The government of the day watched such activities with uneasy eyes and sought to stamp out organisations, the continued existence of which, it was believed, could lead to a rising in this country. Mr Palmer was invited to revise the draft of an address which "The Friends" intended to circulate among their fellow citizens and to see to the publication of this as a handbill. It is believed that had Palmer not been involved the authorities might have disregarded the incident. However, as a Unitarian, he was an attractive target for the outraged feelings of the political "unco guid," and soon he was tried at Perth before the high court for sedition. Sentenced to seven years transportation, he was banished to Botany Bay.

Palmer served his sentence, and was returning home when the vessel on which he sailed was wrecked on one of the Spanish Isles. Here, he was made a prisoner again by the Governor and died in captivity on 2nd June, 1802. Thus passed from the scene Scotland's first prominent Unitarian.

THE ASSOCIATION

In the period which followed Palmer's departure from Dundee, activities did not come to an end. The Society there continued, and from this time until the formation of the Scottish Unitarian Association in 1813 other centres of Unitarian worship included Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paisley, Port Glasgow and Greenock as will be described in the account of the various congregations.

GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITARIANS IN SCOTLAND

The preamble to the first volume of the Minute Book of the General Association of the Unitarians in Scotland runs as follows: "The Unitarian Christians in Scotland had long lamented that while there numbers were so small such few efforts of a public nature were made to diffuse a knowledge of their principles and that they were so little known to their own brethren."

The friends in Glasgow indeed had for several years kept up a Fund whose objects were to excite an attention to the general meaning of the

scriptures and to promote the practice of rational religion. The Unitarians of Edinburgh also felt deeply the necessity of making some efforts to exhibit to others their pure, consoling and benevolent views of the christian religion which a patient examination of the scriptures had enabled them to form. They thought that if by any measures which it might be deemed advisable to adopt they could co-operate with their brethren in Glasgow, Paisley, Dundee, etc., it would accomplish at once the two great objects of promoting union amongst themselves and of extending to others the principles of genuine Christianity.

An Annual General Association which shall be held alternatively in the places where there were any Unitarians appeared to be a means very well calculated to promote these desirable objects.

The rules proposed were circulated among the various churches and the brethren in the various places entered warmly into their views and resolved to support the proposed institution to the utmost of their power.

Accordingly, on 28th July, 1813, the first meeting was held in the Skinners' Hall Chapel, Edinburgh, with brethren present from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Paisley and Dundee. It then was resolved that the Society be denominated "Scottish Unitarian Christian Association" and that the objects would be :

- (1) to promote and keep up an intercourse and correspondence between the different societies in Scotland which are United in the Common Principles of the strict Unity of God, and of his Universal Love of his creatures.
- (2) To support public worship by giving assistance to these societies of Unitarian Christians in Scotland who may be in need of it.
- (3) To assist in defraying the travelling expenses of Unitarian Missionaries in Scotland.
- (4) To contribute to the illustrations and establishment of the Doctrines and Spirit of Christianity by the distributing of tracts.

This meeting, amongst other business, passed a resolution of thanks to Mr. William Smith, M.P., for his part in the recent repeal of these "disgraceful statutes in the codes of the United Kingdom which affected the security and honour of the Unitarian body." Reports from correspondents in various parts of Scotland then were tabled, giving an account of the state of Unitarianism in their respective places. In coming years this system was extended and correspondents in as many as 75 places received supplies of tracts from the Association and sent annual reports on local progress. Among these agents, more weavers were numbered than those engaged in any other occupation.

In the evening 38 gentlemen sat down to dinner in Ferguson's Tavern, with Mr. James Morrison of Edinburgh in the chair. "The meeting" concluded the minute, "was truly characteristic of the warmth and animation which the glorious doctrines of incorrupted christianity are calculated to inspire." At this period Unitarian funds existed in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere and subscribers to any of these were regarded as members of the S.U.A.

From its inception, the Association occupied itself widely in the distribution of tracts and printed sermons. In the first year five hundred of these were sent to Hamilton, Lanark and Melrose. In October it was agreed to send Mr. Smith as missionary to visit Lanark, Carlisle, Hamilton, Glasgow, Paisley, Port-Glasgow and Greenock. Towards his expenses the sum of £7 was voted.

The following year brought a daring decision by the Committee which was advanced for the time. "The Committee are unanimous in thinking that there is no solid reason why females should not be requested to attend the Association dinner, but at the same time they thought that owing to the novelty of the measure it should not be permitted without caution and not at all unless a considerable number of the respectable matrons in Glasgow and Paisley are likely to attend." The change however actually was not carried into effect till 1815.

Mr. Smith carried through his missionary tour and gave a most interesting account of this at a subsequent meeting. In each place the people who assembled were anxious to have further visits and the field looked very promising. The 1814 meeting of the Association was also most encouraging, it being recorded "a pure and holy joy irradiated every countenance. In short it is impossible to convey by any human language an adequate idea of the meeting." One resolution passed urged "all the societies and individuals to pay a more strict attendance to the time set apart for public worship in their respective churches." This arose out of complaints regarding the disturbance caused by late arrivals, which seemed to be a prevalent fault.

During the years 1812/1815 Rev. James Yates of Glasgow was engaged in a pamphleteering controversy with Rev. Ralph Wardlaw, the well known Congregational Minister, on the latter's "Discourse on the Socinian Controversy." The attention attracted by the affair brought many to Unitarian churches for the first time.

Some of the early correspondents deserve our sympathy. Often they carried on such activity as was open to them with little encouragement in a day when their views were suspect. Thus Adam Burt, a Crieff

Solicitor and only adherent in that town reported in 1815 "The pamphlets allocated to me have been distributed as widely as the dictates of prudence would allow but the readers had uniformly returned them with disgust."

Two years later from Newburgh, James Ballingall sadly wrote, "I have for upwards of twenty years stood a single champion here in the cause of truth. All my church here is a Unitarian Quaker who meets with me for mutual comfort."

In 1817 the Committee found it necessary to issue the following statement concerning its secretary:—

"The Committee think it due to themselves to make a decided protest against having any connection with Mr. George Harris's proceedings as delegate at Edinburgh from Paisley on the subject of Reform in Parliament."

Mr. Harris, later to become Scotland's best known Unitarian, was then minister at Port Glasgow.

An interesting account of the Sunday worship of a small Unitarian group of the period is contained in a report from Blackford, Perthshire, in 1818: "We begin with someone giving out a Psalm or Paraphrase. There are four that pray in turn, Will Taylor from the Borland Park is the chief and officiates when there are any strangers in. After prayer a chapter is read, the one to be read being known the day before, and then everyone is allowed to make his observations on the part read after which one may call the attention of the rest to any passage and strangers are invited to take a share in the conversation and to ask an opinion of any passage they please. A sermon is then read and a few minutes are allowed for making remarks. The whole is conducted with the greatest harmony." These simple proceedings would be duplicated in other places where like Blackford, Unitarianism had only a brief history, such as Kilwinning and Melrose.

From 1820 to 1824 the Anniversary Meetings of the Association duly were held but are not minuted, but after that the activities lapsed until 1830. On 18th July of that year a meeting was called at Glasgow by Rev. George Harris, from then on to be for many years secretary and the leading member of the Society. There was an attendance of eighty and new rules were drawn up, one of which permitted any person to become a member on payment of 2/6d. per year.

Among those present was Rev. Archibald Macdonald, formerly of the Church of Scotland, Greenock, who had thrown in his lot with the Unitarians. A resolution was passed welcoming Mr. Macdonald to the cause of God's Truth to which he replied that he was glad to have escaped from

the baleful sentiment which cramps freedom of thought and deforms the beautiful thought of christian doctrine.

An invitation was extended to the celebrated Brahman Remenshee Roy to attend the forthcoming Annual Conference. This Rajah, who was on a visit to Britain, "when sitting down to the story of the evidences of the Bible was convinced of the divinity of its doctrines and that these doctrines constituted Unitarianism." On a visit to London, Rev. Mr. Harris tendered the invitation to the rajah personally and had two interesting meetings. The rajah pledged himself to visit Scotland but did not manage to do so. The announcement of the rajah's death to an Association Meeting shortly afterwards produced "an extraordinary sensation."

In 1832, the year of the Reform Act, it is not surprising to read that political excitement had interfered with progress during the period.

Two ministerial recruits joined the Association in 1837. These were Revs. D. G. Coghill, Edinburgh, who had been educated for the Methodist Ministry, and R. Jackson of the Independent Relief Chapel, Glasgow.

Frequently Mr. Harris was called in to answer misrepresentations of Unitarianism or attacks on its doctrines. One series of lectures was given in Glasgow, Greenock, Paisley, Edinburgh, to answer statements made by H. Colquhoun, M.P., in the Church of Scotland Magazine. In Paisley, great efforts were made by Rev. John Macnaughton and Dr. Burns to prevent Mr. Harris having the use of the Philosophical Hall. This "violation of religious liberty seemed to call for additional service" and in consequence two further lectures were delivered in the Assembly Rooms, which were crowded on both occasions.

The annual meeting of the Association took a similar form each year. A preacher was invited for the Sunday Services and on the following day the business meeting was held. In the evening, a dinner and conversazione concluded the proceedings. Many noted preachers from England and Ireland accepted invitations, including Rev. James Martineau, Liverpool, Rev. Dr. Drummond, Dublin, and Dr. Montgomery of Belfast, and the sermons later were published by the Association.

In 1840 an invitation was extended to the celebrated Rev. D. Channing of Boston, U.S.A., to take part in the annual proceedings, the letter stating "The bracing air of our Mountain regions and our Western country would do you great good." The Association undertook to pay the expenses involved. It is of interest that two copies of the letter were sent, in case of loss or delay, one with the New York Steam Packet and one with

the Great Western Steam Packet. Mr. Channing declined the invitation, with regret, on account of the state of his health.

In 1841 Mr. Harris removed from Glasgow to Edinburgh and preached his farewell sermon at the Anniversary meetings. Twelve hundred people crowded the Glasgow chapel and many failed to obtain admittance. A Silver Salver, together with the sum of £150, was presented to Mr. Harris by friends in Glasgow, Kirkintilloch, Stirling, Tillicoultry, Aberdeen, Carlisle and Dumbarton.

The Association lapsed shortly afterwards, to be revived in 1861 at a meeting held in the Queen's Rooms, Glasgow, after Revs. H. W. Crossley and R. C. Drummond had collected the sum of £98 1s. towards renewing its activities. A Royal Commission on Education was sitting and Rev. Mr. Crossley and Mr. George Hope were examined by the Commissioners and stated "That the Unitarian body in Scotland would heartily support a National system which in religious matters respected the rights of the individual."

On the death of Rev. George Harris in 1859 a Minute was passed expressing the regret of the Association. In a memoir of Mr. Harris it is stated, "He was the intrepid champion of the Unitarian cause, perhaps the most remarkable preacher we ever had for his persuasive eloquence, his tireless labours in the field and his equally tireless pen." To the orthodox clergy Harris was known as "The Devil's Chaplain."

"Our hope lies in the working class that has no social amenities to sacrifice," wrote Rev. H. Williamson, Dundee, in 1869. Very active propaganda commenced about this time and lecture courses were initiated in many towns. Occasional opposition was forthcoming and audiences at Stornaway and Nairn showed particular hostility. A bequest of £3,702 from Mr. M. Allan eased the lot of the Association in 1883, and it was decided to engage a full time lecturer for propaganda purposes. The choice fell on Rev. Christopher J. Street, who delivered lecture courses in many towns. A particularly good report was given of Dumfries when the average attendance at 10 meetings was 35. This was attributed to the fact that the close association of Burns with the town had paved the way for a "broader" religion. This can be questioned on reference to the places noted for particularly bad results, one of which is Ayr, and the other Barrhead.

Reporting on the uphill work of country propaganda in 1889 Rev. A. Webster writes, "The leap into popularity and the flash of success are not for us." In the same year a postal mission carried out by the means of inserting advertisements in the press had considerable success,

attracting many inquiries, including a good proportion from Rationalists.

An amusing incident concerned a claim made by a firm of music dealers in Glasgow. A harmonium had been hired for a service in the South Side of Glasgow. After the meeting this was left behind and the instrument remained undiscovered for over a year. The final settlement left the Association £10 the poorer,

Another event in 1889 appeared to usher in a new era for Unitarianism in Scotland. William McQuaker, a hatter in Glasgow, died and by his will bequeathed the princely sum of £30,000 for Unitarian purposes. The terms of Mr. McQuaker's bequest directed the trustee to promote the principles of Christian Unitarianism in Scotland,

- (1) by supplementing the salaries of ministers of non self supporting congregations which shall show an amount of congregational income as shall attest to the satisfaction of the Trustee a living interest in the work,
- (2) by contributing to the support of missionary preachers,
- (3) by distribution of tracts ;

applications from Mr. McQuaker's native county of Ayr to have preference.

This was the most munificent legacy bequeathed to Unitarianism to that date and to the disappointment of the Scottish Association the British and Foreign Unitarian Association of London was appointed trustee. Shortly afterwards the trustees took a first step in compliance with the terms of the Will by appointing Rev. T. W. Freckleton of London to be missionary lecturer in Scotland for six months.

The Unitarian movement in Scotland has benefitted greatly by the terms of Mr. McQuaker's will, although on many occasions the trustee and the Scottish Association have not seen eye to eye, and from time to time one comes across slight friction in their relations.

At a public meeting of the B. & F.U.A. in 1891 Rev. J. Walker of Glasgow stated, " The form of Unitarianism now being offered in Scotland will never meet the needs of Scots who already had sufficient freedom in religious thought." He believed that some who came to them were changed into atheists, agnostics and secularists. At a subsequent Council Meeting of the S.U.A. a strong resolution was passed, stating that Mr. Walker had misrepresented the position completely. In 1897 the funds of the Scottish Association were exhausted and the congregations requiring assistance were commended to the McQuaker Trustees. Soon after, the

Kilbarchan Church was sold, and the proceeds placed the Association on a sounder footing.

In 1904 the refusal of Unitarian books by the public librarian at Tain led to the insertion of advertisements in local papers offering the works in question on loan. Ninety applications were received and a series of lectures given in Tain, Invergordon and Dingwall.

An enterprising venture by the McQuaker Trustees, commenced in 1907, was the Unitarian Van Mission, which toured Scotland with Rev. E. T. Russell as Missionary. This brought the Unitarian message for the first time to many small towns and villages not previously touched by lecture courses.

In 1908 a Conference of Scottish Unitarians held in Edinburgh called for a Forward Movement but little change seems to have followed. The impression formed of the period since 1910 is one of decline. Five churches existing at that date or later have been closed including the group established at Rutherglen in 1926 which lasted only eight years. The message of Unitarianism now is confined to the four cities, as it has been for a quarter of a century. The Association continues as the representative body of the Unitarian Church in Scotland, and its meetings provide an opportunity for contact among the scattered church members. A Scottish Sunday School Association also is conducted.

In its long career, the Association has watched with interest many of the events in the history of the various Presbyterian Churches in Scotland. Any opponent of creeds or dogmatic tests always had received its support and such events as the Knight and Kilmun cases are duly referred to in the proceedings of the Scottish Unitarian Association.

CONGREGATIONS, PAST AND PRESENT

ABERDEEN

Unitarian worship was not organised in Aberdeen until a later date than in the other Scottish Cities. The presence of two or three Unitarians was reported to the Scottish Association in 1831 and the wish for a visit from a minister or missionary expressed. George Taylor, a local manufacturer, entered into correspondence with Rev. George Harris of Glasgow on behalf of a local group, which apparently had its origins in the Chartist movement. Mr. Harris offered to go to Aberdeen if his coach fare and expenses were met, but as the estimate of these was £12 to £14 the group was unable to give a guarantee and Mr. Taylor wrote that he did not feel called on to incur such a charge personally.

In 1833, Rev. Archibald Macdonald, Unitarian minister at Greenock who had accepted a call to Royston, first decided to visit his parents in Aberdeen. Mr. Macdonald, who was also an enthusiastic Chartist, took the opportunity while in the city of preaching three times on 13th October, 1833. Great excitement prevailed and the crowd was so great that hundreds could not gain admission to the evening service. Next week, the proprietors refused the use of the meeting place and Mr. Macdonald was forced to preach in the open air on Broad Hills. During three busy weeks Mr. Macdonald, as well as preaching, found time to give at least two public lectures and finally saw a Unitarian Society with 24 members formed. In December that year Mr. Harris visited Aberdeen after an exhausting coach journey from Glasgow, his passage being lengthened by snowy conditions. "Mr. Harris had a majestic appearance," we read, and "his preaching evoked fervent enthusiasm." At one of the services in Cooke's Riding School no less than 1400 were present. The local Society now felt strong enough to call a Minister and to guarantee a stipend of £100. The members first gathered in the house of Mr. Wm. Ogilvie, Causewayend, and later in a hall in George Street. For a long time it was found impossible to obtain a pastor and the society passed through a difficult and depressing period.

Ultimately the services of Rev. John Esdaile were obtained. He is described as having been "A man of culture, earnest and progressive." At first the members, who now numbered almost 100, were encouraged but most were of the poorer classes and the collections were small. It was felt that if the congregation had a building of its own enthusiasm might be greater. Differences developed between Mr. Esdaile and the Committee among which was the minister's desire to give up The Sacraments and to read non-biblical literature at services. Mr Esdaile, who also was a popular lecturer on biology, ended his ministry on 22nd October, 1837. Later the S.U.A. inserted an advertisement in the local papers disclaiming connection with services now being conducted by Mr. Esdaile.

The successor Rev. J. Cropper, M.A., who was described as having "good talents, kind disposition, and an excellent delivery and pulpit manner," entered on his duties on 3rd June, 1838. A site now was obtained in George Street for a church and Mr. Cropper toured both England and Ireland to solicit subscriptions. In this he succeeded beyond expectations and on Sunday, 9th August, 1840, the church was opened by Rev. Henry Montgomery, D.D., a well known Irish non-subscriber, and Rev. George Harris, Glasgow. Illustrations show this to have been a neat, but plain fronted building, and it proved so cold that morning worship had to be discontinued during the first winter. In 1841, Mr. Cropper left Aberdeen.

In turn Rev. John Hope, whose ministry until 1846 was a modest and laborious one, and Rev. Wm. Cochrane (1846-47), Rev. C. F. Smith (1847-49), Rev. D. Griffiths (1850-53), Rev. Wm. Stephen (1854-58), Rev. W. S. Smith (1859-61) and Rev. A. Gordon (1862) followed in the pastorate; Mr. Gordon, only 21 years of age, was later Principal of the Unitarian Home Mission College, Manchester. In 1859 the celebrated Dr. Martineau preached here while in the city for the British Association meetings.

Rev. Wm. Sharman arrived in August, 1863, to put new life into the congregation. He was a keen propagandist and preached outdoors in the Castlegate. This led to an unfortunate incident in May, 1865, when a serious disturbance occurred and Mr. Sharman was in imminent danger from a hostile crowd. He sought refuge in a house, where some of the windows were smashed by stones. On account of this incident the magistrates forbade preaching in the Castlegate. In 1868, the year of Mr. Sharman's departure, the average attendance was seventy in the morning and seventy six in the evening.

Rev. J. G. Slater succeeded for a short time; in 1872 Rev. Wm. Bennett followed, being replaced by Rev. David Scott, whose stay was only for a year. "A broad minded man, and an effective reader and speaker," is the description applied to Rev. G. T. Walters (1878-1884). Mr. Walters was a keen Liberal in politics and made many friends among youthful supporters of this cause.

In July, 1884, one of the best known of all the Unitarian ministers in Scotland arrived here from Glasgow. This was Rev. Alexander Webster, who was himself an Aberdeenshire man. On his settlement Mr. Webster found a far from united congregation which was then ready to afford him little assistance. He initiated some reorganisation and also commenced open air preaching at Broad Hill. Outside of the church life Mr. Webster was a frequent speaker on labour and economic questions, and initiated the Aberdeen Children's Fresh Air Fortnight scheme. On health grounds, Mr. Webster left for Kilmarnock in 1891.

One brief ministry—that of Rev. Wm. Birks—intervened before Mr. Webster again accepted a call to Aberdeen in March, 1894. During his previous stay Mr. Webster complained bitterly of the incurable echo and inveterate cold of the church. Accordingly when he returned a move was afoot to erect a new church building. Some delay in selling the George Street building was experienced but finally the present attractive church in Skene Terrace was opened on 23rd September, 1906, when Rev. J. E. Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College preached. At once the membership started to increase and assisted by determined efforts on the part of the minister in soliciting subscriptions both in Britain and America

a deficit of £1700 on the total cost of the new church—£7370—was cleared off.

Towards the end of Mr. Webster's ministry the membership numbered 216. He retired from active service on Christmas day, 1910, and to quote the words of a prominent member, "Mr. Webster raised our cause from one of obscurity to one of prominence in Aberdeen during his second ministry." The greater public tribute paid to him was his election at the top of the poll in the Aberdeen School Board election of 1897, when he polled 14,396 votes, and was called on to act as Chairman. Constantly in the forefront of controversy and debate, Mr. Webster and his wife had an alarming experience during a meeting held in 1900 when high feelings prevailed regarding the South African War. On this occasion they were stoned by a crowd of youths and Mrs. Webster received a severe eye injury.

Throughout his ministries Mr. Webster, who died in 1918, occupied a leading place in the denomination and was well known in outside circles. As a propagandist for Unitarian beliefs he preached at different times in many parts of Scotland.

Rev. Lucking Tavener succeeded in 1911, and during his ministry, which lasted till 1917, he at one stage wrote 620 letters of appeal in twelve months to reduce a debt due by the congregation with very successful results.

Later Ministries included those of Rev. Henry Dawtrey (1918-21), Rev. Arthur Scruton, B.A. (1922-26), Rev. L. J. Belton, B.A., M.Sc. (1927-31), Rev. H. H. C. Jones, B.A. (1931-44), L. B. Short (1945-50), G. Beverley (1950-57), and the pulpit at present is vacant.

CARLUKE

This was an early centre for Unitarian activity and 50 persons were present when Mr. Smith preached here in 1813. The local people were anxious to obtain a pastor, and to supplement his income they suggested that a suitable person also could conduct a school. The cause here was languishing for want of a leader or preacher. "We either stay at home," runs a report of 1814, "or go to the orthodox church, where we hear many disagreeable things."

Later in the year, Mr. Syme of Edinburgh accepted a joint pastorate of Paisley and Carluke congregations, Paisley engaging to give £20 per annum and Carluke £10. Next year one is not surprised to find that the pastor's health was suffering from the necessity of walking the round trip of eighty miles from Glasgow to Carluke once a fortnight. The attendance at

services was from 40 to 50 and local prejudice was wearing off fast. In 1817 Mr. Syme resigned.

The vacancy led to a decline in the prosperity of the congregation, and now less public notice than formerly was taken of its proceedings. "The din once attending our cause much abated," is an extract from the report in 1817. For some years, a few continued to meet for conversation on religious subjects but the poverty of the members mitigated against any change.

However, in 1832 it was arranged that the Rev. W. Clarke should supply Carluke Society every fortnight in a scheme incorporating also Paisley, Tillicoultry and Kilmarnock. Members numbered about 40, and the Society was enthusiastic in its support of the S.U.A.

On account of financial disappointments from other places Mr. Clarke resigned in 1834 and went to Dundee. The congregation now made an effort to obtain his entire service for Carluke and Lanark, and offered to raise more money, but this scheme was found to be impracticable.

Rev. George Harris and others preached occasionally in later years, and the Lords Supper was celebrated when as many as fifty sat down in 1840.

Up till 1851 a small number of persons assembled each Sunday for worship, but the society then came to an end. Considerable enquiry has failed to elicit the meeting place.

DUNDEE

Following the banishment of Rev. Thos. F. Palmer the church at Dundee was continued, but had a very precarious existence. Among those who conducted services and kept the people together were Mr. Robert Millar and Mr. George Speed, who was disowned by a Baptist Church for denying the Deity of Jesus. The Directory of 1809 names Millar as minister, but he never was ordained. The meeting place, prior to a move to Rankine's Close in 1817, is not known.

In 1813 regular attendances numbered as many as sixty and two years later the congregation apologised for its inability to contribute to the S.U.A. Funds. From this time occasional preachers visited the city. In 1817 Mr. Millar attended the Annual Meeting of the S.U.A. when it was recorded that he had been a member of the church for thirty years, notwithstanding the numerous difficulties they had had to encounter during that long period. A few months before a small chapel had been fitted up in regular and neat form. This had attracted new attenders but through the lack of a regular minister these had fallen away.

In 1824-25 the name of a Mr. Spence appears as pastor in the local directory and in the following year Mr. A. McDavid Logan, a convert from the Church of Scotland, for whom the chapel in Rankine's Close was fitted up, replaced him. In 1830 Rev. William Smith was settled and the S.U.A. meeting of that year resolved. "That this meeting cannot but express its cordial approbation of the conduct of Mr. Robert Millar of Dundee who for upwards of forty years has conducted the worship of the Unitarian congregation in this town."

In 1831 Mr. Smith reported an increase in Membership from 25 to 40 and in attendance from 30 to 70. A Sunday School and library had been formed.

Mr. Smith left in 1832 and was succeeded by Rev. Henry Clarke, later missionary in Scotland. Mr. Clarke's ministry was not a success and local support declined. In 1837 he was called to Chorley, Lancashire, and left Dundee. The congregation at this time was meeting in the Thistle Hall, Charlotte Street.

The next pastorate was that of Rev. David G. Coghill, who was invited when Mr. Clark left. Formerly a Wesleyan minister Mr. Coghill who later supplied for six months in St. Mark's, Edinburgh, ended his period in Dundee through a ludicrous incident when he appeared in the pulpit in theatrical costume as Hamlet. This performance directly led to the suspension of activities at a period when the congregation had been contemplating the building of a church.

In 1840, however, Rev. George Harris, on his road to Aberdeen met by appointment in Dundee a group of former members with a view to the revival of activities. Fourteen persons were in attendance, and agreed to revive regular meetings where printed sermons could be read. A committee then was appointed to carry the resolutions into effect but apparently these services lapsed and it was not until 1864 that Rev. W. Sharman of Aberdeen revived the cause in Dundee and the Society again was re-constituted.

In 1866 Rev. Henry Williamson was settled in Dundee, to commence a remarkable ministry which lasted no less than 59 years. Services were commenced by him in the Exchange Hall, Castle Street, and all that was handed down to him by the old congregation was a bible and a psalm book. Mr. Williamson had an encouraging start and the Thistle Hall soon was rented for £35 per annum. With a weekly attendance of 70 to 80 a scheme for a church was set afoot and this was opened on Constitution Road and paid for by 20th November, 1870.

Throughout the district Mr. Williamson spread his message by

sermons and lectures. He wrote of one meeting at Forfar announced by the town drummer where the room was crowded to the door and the speaker had to stand on a chair for want of a platform. In 1871 a Day School was opened in connection with the congregation and a Communion Service was held for the first time.

In the industrial unrests of the eighties Mr. Williamson played a conspicuous part. Great excitement prevailed in connection with a general reduction in wages in mills and factories and Mr. Williamson met and encouraged the female workers who had gone on strike to return to work. Later he was appointed honorary president of the Mill and Factory Worker's Union. An increase in membership of the church was expected on account of these activities but this did not materialise, and in 1890 the membership was down to 33 males and 52 females. Orchestral services started that year brought large attendances for a while but the spread of state education altered the demand for use of the school room in the church building and the Congregation's income declined. Too few of the members were men, and these mainly were of the working class.

No formal agreement existed between Mr. Williamson and his congregation and the result was that he had no fixed stipend, merely taking the balance after all expenses had been paid. In subsequent years the problem of the position in Dundee frequently was before the B. & F.U.A. and the S.U.A., from both of which bodies the church received grants. At a special Meeting in Dundee Vestry attended by a sub-committee of the S.U.A. and the Dundee Committee the view was expressed by the latter group that it was believed that Mr. Williamson's influence was waning and that a change of ministry was desirable. Later, grants were cut off from some sources but at a special meeting of the congregation attended by eight males it was agreed to raise £80 towards Mr. Williamson's stipend.

In 1892 a tablet was erected in the church to the memory of Messrs. Robert Millar and George Speed, the early lay pastors.

A Free Evening School for mill girls and an Employment Office for unemployed girls were enterprises of Mr. Williamson in the early nineties. In 1893 he became a member of the School Board, and was greatly cheered by an invitation to exchange pulpits in 1894 with Rev. David MacRae, successor to Rev. George Gilfillan in the Gilfillan Memorial Church. Complaints often were expressed regarding the loss of young persons who after being brought up in the congregation left for posts in England and the Colonies. The loss of such promising members consistently weakened the church.

Elders were appointed about the beginning of the century to assist the

minister and Mr. Williamson also introduced the use of grapes at Communion in place of wine.

Mr. Williamson continued in office until 1925 and a successor has written, "Mr. Williamson put new life in a struggling cause, made dry bones to live, proclaiming his gospel, the freedom of the human spirit. He inspired men with a will to serve and to sacrifice for a cause which through others derided was dear to his heart." The church in Dundee later was named after Mr. Williamson as a memorial. Miss Helen L. Phillips was assistant to Mr. Williamson in 1925-26 and subsequently Rev. H. Andrew (1925-28), who left to become minister of the Gilfillan Memorial Church, was pastor. He was followed in the pulpit by Rev. A. Whiteford (1929-54) and Rev. A. E. Potts, the present pastor, commenced his ministry in 1955.

DUNFERMLINE

The first correspondent of the Association in Dunfermline was Mr. D. Balfour, Weaver, of Woodhead Street, whose name appears in 1814. In the following year a request was made for a preacher, but nothing further is known of activities here till 1832. In that year, Mr. Stannus of Edinburgh reported that a young man from Dunfermline had called on him stating that he and several others wished a visit from one of the ministers. Mr. Clarke went to the town, and arranged to visit from time to time. Two years later, after considerable correspondence the Association discontinued the visits in respect of "the impossibility of recovering subscriptions due from Dunfermline towards the mission."

In 1839, Rev. Mr. MacLellan preached in Rankin's Hall, to an audience of about 200 persons. Some interruption and discussion occurred but the audience, we are told, "manifestly supported the preacher."

The attention of the Association was drawn by Rev. H. Williamson, in 1872, to the existence of a "Universalist" movement in Dunfermline. This—originally the Church of the Christian Union—split into two branches, one of which, The Church of the Messiah, was ministered to by Rev. R. S. Bowie. Mr. Williamson of Dundee came into contact with this Society and later was invited to lecture in Dunfermline. The minister and people of the Church of the Messiah then expressed their willingness to unite with the Unitarian body.

In 1873, the congregation removed to a new place of worship, and the average attendance was 70. The minister then reported, "Our prospects were never so great as they are at the present time." Nothing further has been learned of this church, which is not listed in the 1879 Directory.

Mr. Bowie published, in 1871, "Spiritual Hymns for Pilgrims Zionward," a collection of hymns for public, social and private devotion.

EDINBURGH

In one of the first papers read to this Society ("A Breach in the Reformed Presbytery," by Rev. W. J. Couper) the author referred to the surprising pedigree of the Unitarian Church in Edinburgh. A few Cameronians, formerly members of the R.P. congregation at Denholm—which was attached to the minority Reformed Presbyterian Presbytery of Edinburgh—migrated to the capital. Here they formed themselves into a Society for religious purposes which they called "Successors to the Remnant who testified against the Corruption of the Revolution Constitution." James Purves, who had attended Glasgow College, was elected Pastor on 15th November, 1776.

Purves also conducted a school in the suburb of Broughton, and this was the Society's first meeting place. The name "Universal Dissenters" was adopted, and a move was made to the Barbers Hall, Edinburgh. After Purves's death on 1st February, 1795, the congregation was without a pastor until 1812. Two amusing entries in the congregational minutes for this period are quoted in the excellent historical account of Edinburgh Unitarian Church, published in 1935. The first reads, "John Fleming withdrew without assigning cause, only alleging that his wife could not endure the opinions held by the Society and would not suffer him to contribute anything to its support," and the second, "The Society was at this time joined by Mrs. Hill who had for a considerable time attended regularly. As she professed a love for the principles and was of decent appearance, no objection was made."

Edinburgh was visited in 1809 and 1811 by Richard Wright, the missionary who saw Glasgow Unitarian Church founded. In the latter year, he found the Society divided into two sections which met respectively in Skinners' Hall and in the Archer Close. As many as five hundred attended his services, which were given in both places of worship. I have tried to trace further facts concerning the Archer Close Group, but it had disappeared prior to 1817. With the repeal of the Penal Laws in 1813, the Edinburgh Society first adopted the name "Unitarian."

Rev. Thomas Southwood Smith became Pastor in November 1812; was first secretary of the S.U.A. at its formation next year. Mr. Smith raised the attendances at Skinners' Hall from 20 to 200, and frequent complaints were made of the unsuitable meeting place, the entrance to which

was unimposing. In 1814 the congregation moved to Carruber's Close, High Street, which also was out of the way, difficult of access, and generally uncomfortable. In the S.U.A. Minutes for 1817 the difficulties of running a congregation in Edinburgh were discussed—"We are aware that Edinburgh is a situation which presents no ordinary difficulties owing to the literary character of the inhabitants and the stormy prejudice which still persists against the opinions which we entertain."

A Fund to erect a chapel was started in 1816 and by 1822 amounted to £312. In this year another move to a hall in Clyde Street, and later a site for a church was purchased. An appeal to friends in England and elsewhere brought gratifying results and the first chapel to be owned by the congregation was opened on 14th September, 1823, by William Johnston Fox. After Mr. Smith's departure a vacancy ensued which lasted till 1817, when Rev. Patrick Cannon engaged for one year, followed by Rev. Thomas Crompton Holland, John Omer Squier and William J. Bakewell. After the latter's departure in 1828, he emigrated to U.S.A. and joined in turn the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches, and Edinburgh Church was ministered to by Rev. Isaac Perry.

Rev. B. T. Stannus was invited to the pulpit in 1831. His fervid preaching attracted large congregations and in two years the membership was doubled. It was now thought that a larger building was required by the congregation, as Young Street Church held only 230. A place of worship to seat 700 was the aim, and a convenient enquiry from Dr. Candlish of St. George's Parish resulted in the church being sold for £700.

The present chapel—St. Mark's Church in Castle Terrace—described as a neat specimen of the Italian style, was opened for worship on 18th October, 1835, when the Services were conducted by Mr. Stannus and Rev. George Harris of Glasgow. Among the Trustees were many men of position and prominence, including Hon. Lord Douglas Gordon Halliburton. Mr. Stannus, whose prosperity followed him into the new building, left for Sheffield in 1838.

Subsequent ministers have been Rev. R. E. B. MacLellan of Ulster, 1838-41, and Rev. George Harris, already mentioned several times in the section relating to the S.U.A. Born at Maidstone, he studied at Glasgow University and had been pastor at Port Glasgow, Bolton and Glasgow. For some time before he arrived in Edinburgh, St. Mark's Church was declining. When a vacancy arose Mr. Harris was felt to be the man to revive the church again to its former place. Although his ministry bore some fruit, Mr. Harris was less successful in Edinburgh than in his former charges, and he left for Newcastle in 1845. On his death in 1859, the

Edinburgh Congregation in an address to Mrs. Harris stated:—

“When the history of Christian Unitarianism in Scotland shall come to be written, there will be none more honoured than that of George Harris.”

Rev. Richard Shaen, M.A., 1845-50. During a large part of Mr. Shaen's ministry the congregation lost the use of the Church on account of tunnelling operations being conducted by the E. & G.R. Co., who were then extending the lines from Haymarket to Waverley. At this period worship was held in Clyde Street Hall, and in the nineties when a similar position arose, they moved to the Oddfellows Hall, Forrest Road. In the same premises services then were being conducted by the remnant of Rev. Andrew Lambie's Anti-Burgher Congregation.

Rev. John Crawford Woods, B.A., 1851-53. Mr. Woods, on 27th June, 1852, delivered a reply to a denunciation of Unitarianism by Lord Provost McLaren of Edinburgh. The church was crowded and many were unable to obtain admission.

Rev. John Gordon, 1854-58.

Rev. R. B. Drummond, B.A., who remained at St. Mark's from 1859 until 1912. Mr. Drummond was greatly beloved by the Congregation, and was regarded as being one of the most promising men in the Unitarian body. During his ministry about 1880, the quarterly communion services were discontinued, the attendances at these being very poor. A bronze and oak tablet to Mr. Drummond's memory is in St. Mark's.

Rev. Dr. Sidney H. Mellone, who was assistant pastor from 1909, later became Principal of the Unitarian College, Manchester.

Rev. Raymond V. Holt, 1912-23. Mr. Holt took an unpopular stand during the first War and faced bravely a great deal of criticism both inside and outside the denomination.

Rev. Sidney Spencer, B.A., 1921-27.

Rev. Wallace B. Tavener, 1927. Mr. Tavener, who is a son of a former minister of Aberdeen Church, has a keen interest in literary, artistic and sociological questions. Mr. Tavener, who preaches a gospel allied to everyday life, is author of “The Challenge of Humanism,” published by the Lindsay Press in 1933.

FALKIRK

A small number of sympathisers were located in Falkirk and Camelon from the inauguration of the S.U.A. At times these adherents suggested

that the services of a minister in the district would greatly increase the number of avowed Unitarians.

In 1840, Rev. Mr. Morrison of Bathgate preached a sermon here containing "a gross and defamous attack on Christian Unitarianism." On Mr. Harris being informed of this, he announced a meeting in Falkirk which was proclaimed by placard and by the town bell man. Five hundred persons attended and listened with the greatest possible attention. After the lecture several friends waited behind, when it was resolved to form a Society for the conduct of worship. Mr. Harris returned at a later date and preached in the Assembly Rooms. At this meeting, the Society formally was inaugurated with Mr. Wm. Ure as President and Mr. Robert Boyd as Librarian. Eighteen members enrolled.

This new congregation secured a place of worship capable of seating seventy persons and fitted up as a chapel at an annual rental of £3 10s. Two years later Mr. Bradshaw of Tillicoultry arranged to preach in Falkirk every six weeks. The Society's meetings for public worship seem to have come to an end prior to 1850.

GIRVAN

The Unitarian cause in Girvan, Ayrshire, was not strong at any period. In March and April of 1837 letters were received by the S.U.A. from this town giving an account of addresses delivered by Alexander Duncan, Burgher minister, containing misrepresentations and abuses concerning Unitarianism. Further, the teacher of the Subscription School for the children of all denominations situated in Hamilton Street had been cited before its directors and accused of heresy. School master Mr. William Goudy thereupon stated his belief in the truth and scripturality of Unitarianism and immediately was dismissed from his situation. Little could be done by the Association, but letters and tracts were forwarded to the interested parties. Later in that year, friends from Girvan were present at the Annual Meeting.

On 22nd and 23rd October, Mr. Harris preached, despite efforts to prevent him, when over 200 attended. Many tracts were disposed of, and it appears that a small Society came into being. In 1849, an almanac reported that "a few assemble for worship," and from 1851 to 1863, Mr. Matthew Scott, a stocking weaver, and others conducted services. A "neat little chapel" was opened with the help of the B. & F.U.A. about 1853, and was located in Wilson Street.

For over twenty years no services were held until Mr. C. J. Street delivered lectures and conducted services for a time in 1885-86. Mr.

Street recommended the holding of monthly evening services, these having attracted an average of 26 hearers during his stay. "No one can tell when the influences of our weakest cause ends and what issues may ultimately result from them," he stated. These concluding words of Mr. Street might have spurred the S.U.A. to further efforts but the church first was let and finally sold in 1892 for £50.

GLASGOW

(UNION STREET, LATER ST. VINCENT STREET)

Unitarian activity in the city dates back to 1787 when a preaching room was opened in the Back Wynd by Jemmy Wardrop, who himself acted as preacher. Dr. Cleland, the noted Glasgow historian and statician, having attended one of the meetings, states, "It appears to me that a considerable part of the congregation assemble from motives of curiosity." The little Society continued its meetings and subsequent leaders included Rev. T. F. Palmer, Benjamin Spencer, who acted as pastor from 1791-93, and William Christie, founder of the Montrose Unitarian group.

The last named was invited to Glasgow in 1793, but left for America in 1795, "being impressed with the threatening aspect of public affairs in my native country." On his arrival in the New World, Mr. Christie continued his Unitarian connections till his death, but by 1798 the Glasgow group had expired.

In the opening years of last century Universalist views were prevalent in the West of Scotland where they had been spread widely by Rev. Neil Douglas.

In Glasgow, a number of Baptists who had adopted these views were disowned by the Baptist body. Accordingly, they contacted the Universalist Society in Paisley which later developed into the local Unitarian Church. The Paisley group already had been in touch with the Unitarian Fund in London, and this resulted in visits by Missionaries to this country. In 1808, Rev. James Lyons of Chester visited this country and he was followed next year by Rev. Richard Wright. Mr. Wright found the Glasgow Unitarians split into two groups which met respectively in the Anderson Institute and the Trades Hall. On 28th September, 1810, the Trades Hall group adopted a formal constitution and took steps to secure ground to build a place of worship. In the following year, Mr. James Yates became the first minister and under his pastoral care the two groups became united. A plot for building a church had been secured on what then was the Western limit of Glasgow—the corner of Union Street and Gordon Street on a site now occupied by the Ca'doro Restaurant. It

was next to a large wood yard and all subscribers to the building fund received interest at 5% on the sum contributed. These sums were not redeemed entirely by the congregation until the church was sold in 1853. In 1813, a library was founded, which continued for over a century and the attendances at services reached four hundred. "The congregation," it was reported to the S.U.A. in 1813, "is in a flourishing condition—there is perhaps scarcely a town where there is so much attention paid to concerns of a religious nature."

This first Unitarian Church is shown clearly in an engraving in "Quiet Old Glasgow," a scarce book: it was a plain building in the style of the 'Meeting House' of the day. When Mr. Yates left in 1815 he was succeeded in the pulpit by Rev. Benjamin Mardon who remained till 1825. In the opinion of the congregation, Mr. Mardon did not exert himself sufficiently in his duties. A split occurred in 1817 when a small secession took place from Union Street.

Mr. Marsden was followed by the celebrated Rev. George Harris, formerly of Port Glasgow and Bolton, who came to Glasgow on the promise of a stipend of £200 per annum. The ministry of Mr. Harris was a great success, and by his preaching he brought into the Unitarian fold William McQuaker who, at his death, left a magnificent legacy for the spread of Unitarianism. In Mr. Harris's time new ventures were a Sunday School (when ordinary day school subjects were taught) and a congregational Benefit Fund. On 7th June, 1826, he performed the first wedding ceremony to take place in the church, at a time when Unitarian clergy in England and Wales were forbidden to carry these through. Mr. Harris left in 1841 after a fruitful ministry leaving behind a congregation of about seven hundred.

The pastorate of Rev. John Taylor, the next minister, led to a further split in the congregation. Mr. Taylor's approach to religion was more of a philosophical character than his predecessor and tension having developed, he left in 1844 and commenced a short-lived congregation in South Portland Street.

Short ministries of Rev. John Boucher and Rev. Charles H. Clarke intervened prior to the settlement of Rev. Henry W. Crosskey in 1852. Mr. Crosskey chose Glasgow out of a number of calls, on account of the opportunities for furthering the cause in a large city. During the ministry the church in Union Street was sold and as the value of the site had become greatly enhanced by the westward spread of the city, the sale realised sufficient money to pay the debts due in the church, to buy a new site in St. Vincent Street and to erect the new and larger church. Accor-

dingly, on 13th April, 1856, the St. Vincent Street Church was opened for public worship by Rev. James Martineau. This handsome building is in the Greek style and during Mr. Crosskey's Ministry the congregation reached its greatest prosperity and influence.

The Rev. John Page Hopps, author of several hymns including the children's hymn, "Father, lead me day by day," succeeded Mr. Crosskey in 1869. Mr. Hopps initiated the Calton services out of which South St. Mungo Street congregation grew. He left in 1877.

Rev. Frank Walters came next and remained till 1885, following which Rev. Albert Lazernby was minister from 1885-99.

At first, Mr. Lazernby's call was far from unanimous, but after a delay of three months a better supported invitation was given. Mr. Lazernby is described as a splendid preacher who possessed the gift of clear exposition in simple language. In 1890, evening services were organised in the Gaiety Theatre, Anderston, and two years later a series of lectures was given in the Glasgow City Hall where the attendances were between 2,500 and 3,000.

Rev. James Forrest, M.A., former E.U. Minister at Kilmarnock who came to St. Vincent Street in 1900, was a keen student of Emerson, and had been for a period McQuaker Trust Lecturer. In 1903, the membership was 305, and Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Services were commenced during Mr. Forrest's ministry which ended in 1910.

Rev. T. M. Falconer arrived and ministered from 1911 to 1915; he revived the communion service which had fallen into disuse; in the War years, Belgian refugees were assisted, and Red Cross work performed. Despite the difficulties of the times, membership of the church increased. Rev. L. Jenkins Jones (1916-27) gave public propaganda lectures in many suburbs and in Helensburgh, Wishaw and Paisley. The church, like those of other denominations, found its membership reduced, and for the first time the figure fell below 200. Mr. Jones, a Welshman, was astonished at the knowledge of and interest in philosophical questions shown by the average Scottish working man.

1928—Rev. Herbert V. Mills who died after less than a year in St. Vincent Street.

1929-33—Rev. Albert E. Mobbs.

1934-37—Rev. Ellis H. Morris, under whose ministry a successful study circle was formed.

1938-46—Rev. George S. Whitby, who ministered during the unfortunate period of the black-out. Mr. Whitby was a most attractive

preacher and when engaged elsewhere often was replaced in the pulpit by his wife. During the war years attendance slumped at times to about 30.

In 1947 Rev. Alexander Reid became the first Scot for forty years to act as pastor. At once after his settlement the attendances increased. A Friendship Club, designed to unite the members in social activities, was formed, and proved successful. New plans for the renovation of the church were projected in 1948, and work was estimated to cost £4,000. Only £180 was available in a reserve fund but the congregation undertook to raise £1,000, and £2,000 was received from the S.U.A. out of the proceeds of the sale of Ross St. manse, and £500 was given by each of the Unitarian Assembly Extension Fund and the McQuaker Trustees. Much altered and provided with many new congregational amenities, the church was reopened by Principal Raymond V. Holt on 27th April, 1954.

Mr. Reid's ministry ended under unfortunate circumstances following an internal dispute in the congregation which was widely reported in the national press and the pulpit at present remains vacant.

The services in the church are of a "plain, unadorned style," and suggestions for the introduction of congregational responses, made from time to time, have proved unacceptable.

One prominent lay member who has left a public memorial was Allan Glen, founder of the school which bears his name. Stephen Mitchell, founder of the Mitchell Library and George Baillie, Donor of Baillie's Institution, were other members of Glasgow Unitarian Church.

REGENT PLACE CHURCH

As already recorded, Rev. Robert Jackson, Minister of the Independent Relief Congregation, Regent Place, Blackfriar's Street, joined the S.U.A. in June, 1837. At this juncture two thousand copies of a "Statement of Opinion" were printed and distributed in the neighbourhood of this church. Mr. Jackson resided at Jeanfield, Camlachie, then a suburban region but now the site of Celtic Park and the membership of his congregation totalled one hundred.

He apparently had been minister of the church for seven years. The congregation met before 1835 in various halls and the church cost £3,900 on which debts totalling £3,400 were due. On 7th March, 1837, the congregation was admitted to the Relief Synod, but it seems that Mr. Jackson continued for a while in occupancy of the chapel and the Association arranged with him to start a second Glasgow Unitarian

congregation. For one year two Unitarian congregations were listed in the Glasgow Directory of 1837-38.

During the Association Anniversary Meetings a service was held in Regent Place Church, but on 7th January of the following year it was announced to the committee that the services had been given up in consequence of the small attendances, and Mr. Jackson requested assistance as to the rent. The committee agreed to release him of this and of gas charges. No further particulars of Mr. Jackson's career can be traced.

SOUTH ST. MUNGO STREET AND LATER ROSS STREET

In 1813 a small weekly meeting for religious purposes was conducted in Calton, and in 1871, Rev. J. Page Hopps of St. Vincent Street Church commenced services in Calton Burgh Hall as a movement for church extension. He reported attendances of one hundred and a Society was formed.

The district was a densely populated area of small homes and where each trade depression was at once reflected on the standards of living. This was the unpromising field in which Rev. William Mitchell commenced work in 1871 with 134 members.

The foundation stone of the church was laid on 22nd May, 1875, and the church opened on the year following. The pastor writes at this period, "It is necessary that in a population such as we are surrounded by there should exist all the influence for good that it is possible to create. The drunkenness, the ignorance, the bad language, scepticism and poverty would drive us all to despair." He now could report a membership of 134.

Mr. Mitchell left in 1878 and was succeeded by Rev. Alexander Webster, later of Aberdeen, who earlier as a layman had been on the first committee of the Calton Church. The church when he arrived was in "a despirited and depressed state," but Mr. Webster, with characteristic enthusiasm, raised funds to clear off the debts and to purchase a small organ.

In 1882 Mr. Webster commenced open air meetings in Glasgow Green, the first ever attempted by a Unitarian speaker. By these meetings and the participation in debates, some were encouraged to attend the church. The addresses given on the Green were generally of a homely kind, directed to the heart rather than to the head. At this stage the membership was in a process of alteration. In place of the small shopkeepers and managers which had formed the bulk before, the church was becoming a rallying place for thoughtful earnest working men.

On Mr. Webster's departure for Aberdeen, in 1884, he was succeeded by Rev. Joseph Taylor. Commencing his ministry under favourable auspices, he found the congregation warm and generous. Mr. Taylor continues previous activities including the services on the Green—with less success than before—but later "He began to show an inclination towards an absolute authority in Church Government." This led to a period of dissension which resulted in Mr. Taylor's departure in 1886.

The next ministry started under interesting circumstances. Rev. C. J. Street, Scottish U.A. Missionary while supplying at Ross Street, exchanged pulpits for one Sabbath with Rev. W. L. Walker of Great Hamilton Street Congregational Church at a time when such an exchange with a minister from another denomination almost was unique. This prepared the way for Mr. Walker's secession from the Congregational Church, and on 14th February, 1886, he was inducted to the Ross Street pulpit. A period of some difficulty now commenced. The attendance was reduced to almost 40 and members were lost in several ways. Several members left because of the introduction of the Essex Hall Hymnal, and others joined various labour-inspired movements.

"The People's Church" commenced in Glasgow about this period with a meeting place being near Ross Street, which also drew members away. In 1893 matters came to a head when the McQuaker Trustees intimated that if a more favourable report of the conduct and prospects of the church was not received by the end of the year the considerable grant paid by them would be withdrawn. The congregation then stated that "They had stood faithful to their minister even when they had long seen that he was powerless to attract new members." Mr. Walker was invited to resign and at first opposed the idea. Finally, on his withdrawal, five members left with him.

Rev. George Pegler, B.A., followed from 1894 to 1896, and Rev. E. T. Russell from 1898 to 1908. In the latter year when Mr. Russell left to become McQuaker Trust Lecturer the membership was 91. Mr. Russell described his congregation as "a band of faithful men and women who worked well and gave well. Our people are only few and are nearly all of them working class with uncertain incomes."

Later Ministries were that of Rev. Arthur Scruton (1909-12), Mr. F. J. Barnett Ayres (1913), Rev. M. B. Shelland, Rev. E. T. Russell (1919-20) and Rev. Richard Lee (1922-28). Under Mr. Lee's ministry the church had its most prosperous period. Mr. Lee was a Glasgow Town Councillor and a well known figure in a variety of activities, including the peace movement. He left in 1928 to become minister of the Great Meeting House, Coventry, one of the leading provincial Unitarian Churches where

he had a successful ministry which ended there almost ten years ago. Rev. W. G. Price succeeded him in Calton for one year only.

At this stage the prevailing industrial depression was being felt keenly in the east end. The working class membership were unable to contribute to the church's funds to any extent, and the character of the services changed. For a number of years an evening meeting only was held each Sunday at which addresses on all manner of topics were given by laymen of every creed and belief. A chairman conducted the proceedings, hymns were sung, and questions from the audience invited. At the close a cup of tea was served to the company and a vivid account of one of these meetings may be found in the files of the Glasgow "Forward."

For a while the church was closed, but attempts were made by several of the St. Vincent Street ministers to revive the old cause. In particular, during the ministry of Rev. G. S. Whitby, a determined effort was made to bring fresh life to the Ross Street Church. New furnishings were installed and considerable publicity given to a service conducted in the afternoon. The character of the area had changed very much and support could not be looked for from the locality. Services, accordingly, were discontinued in 1947. The church and manse were sold for £5,300 and in terms of the title deed the proceeds passed to the S.U.A. The congregation met for a short term in St. Vincent Street Church Hall and in 1948 amalgamated with that congregation.

GREENOCK

In 1813, the report from Greenock stated the certainty of the writer that if a place of worship was opened many would countenance and join the cause.

As already mentioned, Unitarianism had an accession in 1830, when Rev. Archibald Macdonald of the Church of Scotland, Greenock, identified himself with the cause. Shortly afterwards a Society was formed with 30 members. Next year, the hall in which it met having been purchased by Greenock Library, a building in Sir Michael Street was taken on lease, fitted up as a chapel, and opened on 19th June, 1831. Towards the necessary cost, members subscribed £62.

Mr. Macdonald was invited to be minister, and reported to the Association that year a regular attendance of 70 in the morning and 100 in the afternoon. The chapel, which seated 270, was crowded on Sabbath evenings.

William Macall is listed as pastor in 1834-35, and in 1837 Rev. James Forrest occupied the pulpit. In 1840 a special series of lectures was held at which several ministers from other parts of Scotland participated, but the congregation seem to have expired shortly afterwards.

In later years, courses of lectures were given at various times and in 1885-86 it was reported that many who attended these had left the town owing to the trade depression then prevailing.

KILBARCHAN

The history of the Kilbarchan congregation, which features frequently in the minutes of the Association from formation in 1883 till its demise twelve years later, is a sad story of hopes unfulfilled.

As early as 1817 Unitarians resided in this centre of handloom weaving. They reported then that the Universalists had Sunday worship in the village frequently, and expressed a hope that an organised Unitarian Society might soon be formed.

Although this was not accomplished the Paisley congregation, for decades, included members who lived in Kilbarchan and walked to and from Paisley—six miles either way—every Sunday.

A course of lectures was promoted in this village in 1883 and these resulted in the expression of a strong wish by a group of the inhabitants for regular Sunday services. A dilapidated old school room was obtained and this was opened for worship on 1st May, 1883. The average attendance was over 80, and later 50 or 60 joined as subscribing members. Rev. J. E. Stronge, formerly of Belfast, was inducted to the joint charge of Paisley and Kilbarchan in October, 1884.

In 1885 a scheme was started to build a church for which the congregation had raised £400. The S.U.A. added a grant of £100 and stated in its report, "Kilbarchan is a triumph of which every member of the Association has reason to feel proud." As happens frequently the cost of the church exceeded the estimate and when the foundation stone was laid on 1st September, 1886, £750 of the enlarged figure of £1,100 had been paid or promised. Zion's Acre Church was opened for worship on 8th May, 1886, but it soon was found that the joint pastorate was not a success, and Mr. Stronge resigned in December 1887.

The financial affairs were in some disorder, and bonds over the church property caused great anxiety. The settlement of Rev. Joseph Harrison of Accrington as minister of Kilbarchan congregation alone led to a revival

of interest and a singing class and Sunday school as well as various other week-night activities were introduced.

Finance remained the great problem. Almost all the members were handloom weavers, whose average earnings were about 10s. per week. In consequence they could not pay more than threepence per week. Although the membership exceeded one hundred, the annual income was very small.

In these depressing circumstances Mr. Harrison resigned in 1891. Shortly before, he had been elected to Kilbarchan School Board, a considerable feat for a Unitarian in these days. This, he felt, might have been the means of extending the influence of liberal thought locally, and he resigned his charge to go to Preston with great regret. Mr. Harrison also complained that his health had been much impaired by the long walk along a lonely country road from his manse to the village.

On his departure the attendances had fallen to 30 and the collections for one year totalled only £6 14s. 4d. Bond interest was in arrears and the McQuaker Trustees passed a resolution stating "that to retain a settled Minister in Kilbarchan is undesirable under the present conditions," and proposed to withdraw the grant paid by them to the congregation. It then was alleged that the congregation were not fulfilling the conditions laid down in Mr. McQuaker's Will by failing to show a living interest in the work.

A new arrangement was made with Mr. Matthew R. Scott, a prospective student of Divinity, to supply the Kilbarchan pulpit. Again the prospects seemed bright and in 1893 a petition was read from 81 members asking the S.U.A. to appoint Mr. Scott a minister. Apparently, the outcome had been anticipated for the Association ordered the name of the church to be repainted on the notice board and the words "Minister, Mr. Matthew R. Scott" to be deleted. Mr. Scott, of course, was unordained.

From time to time Mr. Scott was asked about his intentions to commence studies for the ministry and in 1894 he was recommended to the Manchester College, Oxford, for acceptance as a student. Shortly afterwards Mr. Scott announced his decision to leave Unitarianism and the Committee recorded that they had no objection.

On this unexpected development the congregation wrote, "We regret we cannot see our way to carry on the services." The church, after standing empty for a period, was sold for £700 in 1899, for use by the Salvation Army.

Throughout its short career, large sums had been granted to the Kilbarchan Church by both the S.U.A. and the McQuaker Trustees, to maintain public worship and also to clear bonds and other debts due on the

church. It perhaps was some consolation that the proceeds of the sale helped the Scottish Association in its work for a considerable time.

In recent years I spoke to an old man who was the first child to be baptised in this church. He confirmed the information gathered from sources elsewhere of the feeling of social ostracism experienced by the Unitarians in this attractive village. He said also that the closing of the church had left a void in the life of some of its faithful members which never was filled.

KILMARNOCK

(CLERK'S LANE)

Sermons in connection with the S.U.A. were preached at Kilmarnock in 1831. Later Rev. George Harris conducted worship there for a large congregation and at the request of local sympathisers he drew up notes for the conduct of a Christian society. This led to the establishment of a society "with good prospects of success." Later on, Mr. Clarke included Kilmarnock in the list of towns visited by him, but in 1834 the Society was in arrears with its payments towards his stipend. After considerable correspondence, the Association allowed the matter to drop but Mr. Clarke discontinued his visits.

The next entry in the Association records relating to Kilmarnock in 1885 is of unique interest considering the previous history of the church concerned—Clerk's Lane Church. This was the very building in which Rev. James Morrison had preached for the United Secession Church until he was declared not to be in connection with that body any longer for doctrinal error.

In its vestry on 18th May, 1843, the Evangelical Union was formed, to which church the congregation adhered.

In later years, Rev. James Forrest became minister of this noted and ancient congregation. Mr. Forrest became uncomfortable in the ranks of the Evangelical Union and finally withdrew. He remained at Clerk's Lane which now was known as "Clerk's Lane Free Christian Church."

This development arose out of the fact that two elders of the Clerk's Lane Congregation presided at lectures conducted by Rev. C. J. Street, the S.U.A. lecturer, and expressed sympathy with his teachings. They were supported by Mr. Forrest and although a few persons resigned when he left the Evangelical Union a number of outsiders were attracted to take their places.

The Committee of the Association passed the following resolution :—

“ That this Committee presents its sincere congratulations to the Clerk’s Lane congregation, Kilmarnock, and to the step they have recently taken in the cause of religious liberty.”

In 1888, Mr. Forrest applied for a grant to assist him in giving lectures in Kilmaurs, Newmilns, Galston and other towns. This was granted, but not without some opposition. In 1890 Mr. Forrest left to be McQuaker Trust Lecturer in Scotland.

In 1891 Rev. Alex. Webster became minister here. He found the people open minded and states in his Memoir, “ it was pleasant to be associated with such staunch and gracious people.”

The members were keenly interested in social and political questions, and Mr. Webster allied himself with James Keir Hardie and other stalwarts of the emerging labour movement.

To clear off a bond on the church, Mr. Webster set off in a begging tour of England and raised the sum necessary. The congregational life again was becoming brisk when Mr. Webster accepted a call to Aberdeen after only two years in Kilmarnock.

Clerk’s Lane congregation was not in membership of the S.U.A. and in 1893 gave its reasons for standing aloof :—

“ The prejudice is so very strong in Kilmarnock against Unitarianism that we are firmly convinced that if we joined your Association our Membership would be further reduced and we cannot afford to lose members.”

Two short ministries, about the end of the century, were those of Revs. M. R. Scott and A. Henderson. In 1901, when the church was vacant, the congregation approached the S.U.A. for financial assistance as there was a danger of the congregation being dispersed and the historic building sold to clear off debts due. It was then arranged that the property be transferred to the S.U.A.

When Rev. A. Irvine Innes arrived as pastor in 1902, he found 24 active members. These were increased to 78 and it looked as if the reorganisation carried out was bearing fruit. “ We are a small and struggling body,” wrote Mr. Innes, “ who can fight but slowly against prejudice and bigotry.” A crisis in the affairs of the church was reached following the resignation of Mr. Innes early in 1904.

For a period services were suspended but a new start was made under Rev. Wm. Wilson who reported afterwards that the Church “ was at its

lowest possible ebb and was completely out of favour with the general public." By next year, 1907, Mr. Wilson had resigned and the congregation no longer existed.

KIRKINTILLOCH

In 1839 Mr. Harris preached here several times on weekdays by request. On 18th October, 1840, the friends here agreed to assemble together on Sunday for Unitarian worship and Messrs. Thomson and Boyd were appointed to conduct the services.

On Sunday evening, 22nd November, 1840, Mr. Harris preached and in the course of the same day the redoubtable Rev. Andrew Marshall enjoined his people not to hear the Unitarian preacher—affirming that "none but the ignorant, the drunkard or the fornicator would ever embrace Unitarianism. People who attended will be summoned before the Session." "Despite this," runs the report, "two hundred attended and many were unable to obtain admission." A repeat of the lecture was given on the Tuesday following.

Preachers occasionally supplied at Kirkintilloch which has a Quaker Tradition, after this, but the society was dormant by 1847.

KIRKCALDY

In 1814 a correspondent reported to the Association "That till lately there was a small Society who regularly met but that through the departure of some and the defection of others it is in a manner dissolved." From time to time this town was looked on as a promising field for activities. On several occasions Kirkcaldy friends were present at the Annual Meeting of the S.U.A. but visits from Rev. H. Williamson, Dundee, in 1869 seem to have been the first attempt to organise activities here. Mr. Williamson never had fewer than fifty at his meetings, and when in 1874 he obtained the services of Rev. Andrew Webster for Perth it was part of the bargain that he also was to supply Kirkcaldy.

Accordingly Mr. Webster arrived in the town on his first visit to be welcomed by the only local contact—Mr. H. B. Melville, described by Mr. Webster as "faithfullest of the faithful." It was in the Templar Hall that Mr. Webster was to speak but the keeper "wouldn't open the Hall for any Unitarian." Consequently, when Messrs. Webster and Melville turned the key themselves, they found the remains of a Saturday Soiree littering the floor. However, the minister and supporter cleaned and swept the floor and set forms. Twenty eight attended and this number

increased on future occasions. Later, Mr. Webster came every fortnight, but found Kirkcaldy a difficult place to work in.

However, when the McQuaker Trust Lectures commenced Kirkcaldy was one of the first centres. These were held on Sabbath evenings in the Public Buildings and soon led, on 27th October, 1890, to the foundation of a congregation. The membership was between 30 and 40 and Rev. James Forrest, M.A., McQuaker Trust Lecturer, originally had charge of this new enterprise.

The first regular minister of the congregation was Rev. E. A. Parry of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, who was settled here in 1892. Considerable progress now was made, and attendances reached, at times, the high figure of 188, and a "Carlyle" Literary Club was most successful for a time. During the Centenary year of Burns's death—1896—Mr. Parry was President of Kirkcaldy Burns Club. His committee arranged for Rev. Mr. Webster of Aberdeen to give the oration at the open air gathering held on this occasion, and no less than 6,000 were stated to have heard his address.

In 1897, great satisfaction was expressed when the provost of the town opened a Sale of Work held on behalf of the Church Building Fund. With the assistance of a grant from the McQuaker Trustees the church was opened for worship on 25th March, 1899. It is a neat little building, the acoustic properties were described as "quite satisfactory" while the surroundings were pleasant.

The congregation were very pleased when Mr. Parry was in 1900 invited to take his turn of the Public Park services with other local ministers. In 1901 Mr. Parry resigned and went to Liscard.

Rev. C. A. Ferguson was ordained in 1902 but he resigned after only seven months. Rev. Felix Taylor, B.A., followed for a short spell and in 1908 Rev. E. T. Russell, missionary minister, was stationed here for a time. The largest audience during Mr. Taylor's stay was 29.

Rev. James Forrest, late of St. Vincent Street Church, Glasgow, accepted an invitation in 1910. There were now welcome signs of a revival and former members were rallying to the church. After a further short ministry the church had a period without a minister until in 1917 Mr. S. T. Page Smith was in charge. When he left, lay preachers maintained services for a while.

By 1920 the church was closed; it later was sold and to-day is the Telephone Exchange.

Like Kilbarchan, Kirkcaldy was a congregation of which high hopes

were entertained. Despite the assistance given, however, the church never enjoyed the settled conditions which make for permanency.

PAISLEY

The Unitarian Church in Paisley when services were discontinued at the beginning of this century had a history going back almost a hundred years.

This Society dated from almost 1805 and originally had Universalist tendencies. These probably were derived from the movement of Rev. Neil Douglas in Greenock and elsewhere. In 1813, the regular attendance on Sundays was between 60 and 70 and the friends were in general "men of considerable talents, learning and respectability." In the following year, a plan was introduced by which Rev. Mr. Syme acted as pastor both at Paisley and Carluke, Paisley contributing £20 per year towards his stipend. This scheme lasted only two years, and the Association was disappointed that only sixteen persons in Paisley subscribed.

In 1817, a project was afoot to build a chapel, and the foundation stone was laid that year. This church in George Street was approached by a close and was on the upper floor of a two storied building. Its capacity was for sixty persons and this usually was ample for the numbers attending. In 1832 Mr. Clarke arranged to preach here every month, but the congregation shortly afterwards being called on to pay up a debt due on the chapel, declined, for financial reasons, his further assistance. The debt can not have been cleared, for in 1838, the congregation obtained a grant of £20 from the B. & F.U.A. as again they had been called on to pay up the sum due immediately, which was impossible without outside assistance.

In 1835 the Association meetings were held in Paisley and in 1840 a course of lectures was promoted in the Assembly Rooms. In the years between 1847 and 1865 the conduct of the Paisley services was in the hands of lay preachers Messrs. Colin Dunlop, David Wilson and Robert Findlay, who also from time to time held services in Renfrew.

In 1869, when Rev. Thos. W. Scott was in charge of the congregation, the average attendance, previously 15 in the morning and 30 in the afternoon, had risen to 30 and 40 respectively since Mr. Scott's arrival.

A conference between members of the Association and the Paisley congregation was held on 18th October, 1869. At this meeting it was suggested to the congregation that a new church should be built, mainly because the outward appearance of the existing church was unprepossessing.

At a meeting in 1870, the congregation decided to take steps to obtain a new building. The result was the withdrawal of two leading members who were trustees and led to a great deal of trouble in the future, as the retiring members held the church actings afterwards to be "null and void."

Mr. Scott reported in 1871 that Paisley church was declining and if not certain to die out in a few years at least was not making any progress. In 1872 Mr. Scott resigned and Mr. Webster became minister in the same year. He walked to and from Glasgow every Sunday and he described the congregation as "A very devoted but somewhat depressed gathering. They had suffered in their struggle and did not invite others to do battle. They welcomed recruits yet would have them beware the penalties attached to the Unitarian heresy."

After eighteen months Mr. Webster left and Rev. W. Bennett was the next minister. In 1882 the pulpit again was vacant and it was reported to the S.U.A. that Paisley church has almost ceased to exist.

Rev. Christopher J. Street, who had been appointed as lecturer by the S.U.A. was also placed in charge of Paisley congregation. His attentions revived the life of the congregation and his public lectures were "successful beyond all expectations. Practically all the old Paisley Unitarians have joined us, as well as a considerable number of new and energetic members." In 1884 a new era was ushered in when Rev. J. E. Stronge of Belfast became pastor of both the Paisley and Kilbarchan congregations, and on 5th October of that year he was inducted at Paisley. During his ministry services were conducted in the George A. Clark Town Hall.

As reported in the account of Kilbarchan church Mr. Stronge resigned in 1887 and it was then reported that the Paisley people had given up the services in the town hall.

The members returned to their humble meeting place in George Street and for some time office-bearers took turns in conducting the service.

A last effort was made in 1897 under the auspices of the McQuaker Trust. Rev. A. C. Henderson, B.D., who formerly had been Unitarian minister in Melbourne and earlier assistant to Rev. David Macrae in the Gilfillan Memorial Church, Dundee, was missionary. The services again were conducted in the Clark Town Hall and the congregation now was "Paisley Free Christian Church," probably because Mr. Henderson stated that the first difficulty he had to encounter in the town was the strongly rooted prejudice against the denomination. Again, some early success attended the effort and the church was stated to be "an affectionate family bound together by the ties of love."

By the next year Mr. Henderson had resigned and very little interest was reported. Services then were temporarily suspended and the congregation lapsed.

PERTH

James Chalmers, Weaver, Thos. Cree's Lane, Perth, is the first active Unitarian in that city to have, in 1813, his name recorded in the records of the S.U.A. Owing to the current evangelistic trend in the Fair City, the only activity then attempted by him was the distribution of a few tracts to neighbours.

A few Unitarians "hoped to open a place here" in 1831. About this time a short lived Unitarian Baptist church—the only one ever to exist in Scotland—was open in Perth, as I have recorded in a previous paper to this society. (*Lesser Known Church Law Cases.*)

A few years after the settlement of Mr. Williamson in Dundee, 1866, he gave a series of lectures in Perth, which he regarded as the most promising field in Scotland for missionary work. A committee was formed, and services were held in the Masonic Hall. Mr. Williamson conducted these for a period in 1870, and attendances varied from 30 to 100. Later, sermons were read to those attending by office-bearers and the audiences immediately were reduced. Sometimes only the Committee were present and a further cause for depression at this time was the loss of nearly half of the active attenders to the Edinburgh branch of the Secular Society.

About 1874, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association decided to celebrate its jubilee by raising a fund of £10,000 for missionary endeavour. Mr. Williamson secured the promise of help from this fund for a new effort in Perth and obtained the services of Rev. Alex. Webster for missionary service there.

In his book, *Memories of a Ministry*, Mr. Webster describes vividly his first sermon preached under this scheme. The meeting place was the Good Templar Hall, which was seated for four hundred persons. The attendance numbered only seven, and next week on account of prejudice the small group was banned altogether from having the use of the hall.

After periods in other buildings the Society obtained the use, with the help of a generous friend, of a building which became the first Unitarian Church in Perth connected with the S.U.A. Formerly it had been the Arts School, North William Street, and the building was extensively renovated, great assistance being lent by congregational craftsmen. In May 1876 the church was opened for worship.

At this period, the society consisted of one hundred persons, young and old. A crippling blow was struck to the church's prosperity when the Caledonian Railway Company transferred certain of its works from Perth to Glasgow. Immediately, the church lost a large proportion of the membership and in 1879, Mr. Webster left. The Wilkie family and Mr. John Pullar, Bridge of Allan, he records as being among his main supporters while here.

Services, conducted by lay preachers from Dundee, continued in the church and kept the members together. On 28th December, 1879, Mr. David Jobson, after taking the sermon, left by train for home to perish in the Tay Bridge disaster.

In 1883-85 Rev. C. J. Street was in charge as S.U.A. missionary. He reported average congregations of 40, stating, "The work at Perth is very uphill. The place is sleepy and the public generally seem afraid to avow their tendencies to liberal religion." The members numbered only fourteen and a course of week night lectures failed to revive the cause.

The church later was disposed of, but a new effort was made during a few years from 1913. Rev. E. T. Russell then was pastor of Stenhouse-muir Universalist Church as well as Perth Unitarian congregation, which now met in the Guild Hall, which at an earlier stage had been refused for Unitarian worship. In 1919 Mr. Russell left this post and the services ended.

PORT GLASGOW

At the first meeting of the Scottish Association it is reported from Port Glasgow that the cause there was making progress slowly—the group here was few in number, and did not have regular meetings although occasional visits were made by Missionaries.

As a congregation, Port Glasgow came into being in 1820, with Rev. George Harris as its first Minister, and had a "considerable vogue," to quote a local historian. Its meeting place was in Gillespie's Wynd and Rev. Inglis of the Secession Church decided to drive the invaders from the field by giving weekly lectures on the Confession of Faith.

In 1831, the membership was 18, and nine years later a new Trust Deed was drawn up when Mr. Harris of Glasgow in the name of the Trustees appointed Mr. Andrew Proctor to keep the key of the chapel.

This society appears never to have had another minister, and in the 'forties services were conducted by Mr. Christopher Dunlop of Paisley and other lay preachers. An entry in an almanac for 1849 states, "Chapel let : no service." The building afterwards became the Oddfellows Hall, and is now removed.

UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, STENHOUSEMUIR

This congregation is one of the most interesting of all those attached to the Association in its long history.

Its origin appears to have been as one of the "Churches of the Christian Union" which existed in several places about the time of the founding of Stenhousemuir Church in 1867.

An early pastor was J. U. Mitchell, who in later years conducted the services in the Universalist Church, Dunfermline. In 1870 he combined pastorates at Larbert and Dunfermline under the auspices of the Christian Union. The church was built in 1876.

Surviving members of the Church are unsure when and how the name "Universalist" came to be adopted and are certain that the church never at any time had any connection with any Universalist body either in Britain or America. For many years the preaching was done by George Ure, a local shoemaker, John Ure, a foundry worker, and other laymen.

It was as a result of Rev. E. T. Russell's tour with the Unitarian van as McQuaker Trust Missionary that contact was established with the S.U.A. in 1900. An outcome was the holding of a Unitarian Convention in Stenhousemuir on 19th June, 1909.

By next year Mr. Russell was conducting the morning service and membership greatly increased under his ministry. Other members and laymen from Glasgow and Edinburgh also assisted and a church choir was formed which "bid fair to become a great success."

During the years 1913-19 Mr. Russell acted as pastor of Stenhousemuir and Perth congregations, but the arrangement came to an end and the Stenhousemuir pulpit again was filled by "supplies," mainly lay and occasionally ministerial, until it ceased to meet about 1926. In the final years, the attendance, which had reached one hundred in Mr. Russell's day, was reduced to about a dozen. The church was sold to local freemasons.

STIRLING

On 17th December, 1839, Mr. Harris preached in the Guild Hall, Stirling to two hundred people. On the previous evening the Town Council had debated a motion by the Provost that the let be cancelled. By a majority of one vote it was decided to let the Unitarian meeting proceed for this occasion only.

A short time later Mr. Harris again went to Stirling, but was unable

to obtain a meeting place. For a time "bigotry was triumphant" until he was offered the use of a school in St. Ninians. Proceeding this "the clergy became alarmed, the parents of the children were frightened and the schoolmaster at the instigation refused the room." The Unitarian friends however, obtained the keys, but a hostile crowd assembled, in addition to which the schoolmaster was insolent and threatened all manner of hurt should Mr. Harris attempt to proceed.

However, an individual stepped forward and offered his nearby cottage to which the supporters now made their way. Both rooms and the entrances were crowded and a deputation from Bannockburn attended Mr. Harris the next day and offered a school room there for future meetings if necessary.

Shortly afterwards a lease was taken for twelve months of the Trades Hall in Stirling for the holding of Unitarian worship. This followed the Missionary efforts of Mr. Harris. In 1842, Mr. Bradshaw of Tillicoultry arranged to preach in Stirling monthly. The society here seems to have been a short-lived one, and does not appear in later records.

TILlicoultry

As early as 1814 the list of corresponding members of the S.U.A. includes the entry "Tillicoultry, Mr. Robert Walker." Shortly afterwards a society was formed which reported in 1831, "Public Worship has been held for a considerable time." The attenders numbered 25 to 30 and there was a Sunday School.

From time to time Tillicoultry was visited by the available Ministers and Missionaries in Scotland and on these occasions large crowds assembled, drawn from a wide area.

Mr. Clarke, the Association's missionary minister, commenced to preach in 1831 on a scheme which provided for eight visits to Tillicoultry per year, the worshippers there agreeing to contribute £12 per annum. This plan did not last for long.

In January 1841 the society purchased the old Secession Church (on the Burnside) for £149. This was opened for Unitarian worship on 21st February of the same year, when Rev. G. Harris preached and Mr. W. A. Jones of the University of Glasgow introduced the worship. Many friends from other places were present and at the close of the evening several persons were kindly entertained by Mr. Andrew Walker, a leading local supporter.

It then was arranged to conduct public worship every Sabbath and Mr. Robert Walker was requested to act until a suitable minister could be found. Later in the year Rev. George Harris conducted the first Communion Service when 31 partook.

On 10th October, 1841, Rev. T. Bradshaw, formerly of Cranbrook, Kent, who had undertaken the charge of Tillicoultry, as well as the supply of the Missionary Stations at Falkirk, Dunblane and Stirling, was introduced by Rev. James Forrest, M.A., Greenock. At a meeting shortly afterwards the Society approved rules for its conduct similar to those of Glasgow congregations.

Mr. Bradshaw does not seem to have waited long, and shortly afterwards the pulpit was occupied by Rev. Archibald Browning, formerly Minister of Tillicoultry United Secession Church, from which he had retired in 1825 to devote himself to teaching. Mr. Browning conducted an Academy for both day and boarding pupils, frequently having as many as forty boarders. Following Mr. Browning's death in 1858, the congregation is listed for two further years, after which it appears to have dispersed. This church also became a Masonic Hall.

RUTHERGLEN

This congregation, the last to be formed in Scotland originated through a break away from Ross Street Church, Glasgow. The services were commenced in 1926 and were held in the Orange Halls.

At first, Mr. R. Weir Davidson, who later entered the Ministry, was in charge, and he was followed as lay preacher by Mr. Kenneth M. Street, who today is Secretary of the Scottish Unitarian Association.

The lack of a fully qualified minister made progress here difficult, and the services were discontinued about 1934. Several former members now are on the roll of St. Vincent Street Church, Glasgow.

CONCLUSION

Rev. Mortimer Rowe, M.A., D.D., of the Unitarian Offices in London, wrote concerning this lecture—"I shall be interested if you intend to speculate on the reasons why a 'Rational' form of Christianity has failed to meet with a more ready response or a more prosperous career in the towns and cities north of the Border."

These reasons to me seem not far to seek. A nation like Scotland, which was raised in past generations on the Shorter Catechism, never has been a promising field for any denomination with beliefs contrary to that manual. One feels that many of the weavers and other humble trades people who originally were attracted to Unitarianism may have owed their interest partly to the spirit of change then abroad. It may be that political activities in the years prior to the passing of the Reform Act diverted the energies of many such adherents, and the poverty of these people in districts where small Unitarian Societies were started clearly rendered them incapable as a group from maintaining public worship.

So far as the towns are concerned Unitarianism has suffered from the same drawback as other denominations. The spread of city areas has made a central place of worship inconvenient for many members, and the general decline in church attendance affects isolated congregations to a much greater extent than those who rely on support from the neighbourhood.

The more frequent ministerial changes recorded in this address when compared with those in other denominations is another factor which affected the prosperity of the Unitarian Churches ; most of the ministers having been English, it is not to be wondered at that they feel peculiarly cut off in Scottish cities where little opportunity for fraternising with their fellows exist. Many such pastors have left for health reasons, and it is not surprising that a Scotsman like Rev. Alex. Webster had more success than any of his non-native contemporaries.

The denomination also has failed to attract any large number of converts by conviction. Thus, Mr. Williamson of Dundee wrote in 1898 after 30 years in that town. " No doubt the idea of our succeeding in detaching families or other church-going people from other Churches is a delusion. I have never found a case where on theological grounds alone a change was made."

Not many people then were ready—there are fewer to-day—to apply themselves to the doctrinal questions involved. In past days, too, a certain number of people were attracted to Unitarianism by an aversion to creeds and confessions. The broadening of religious ideas elsewhere and the decline of importance given to old fashioned religious standards has made such conversions even rarer.

One must read of the large numbers who attended the services of early Unitarian missionaries with some caution. The same accounts are given by Wesleyan, Swedenborgian, and Quaker travellers, and it must be assumed that most people attended because of the strong religious interest then prevailing, and the human fact that such a visit then was a welcome

change from the usual round of life. It is to be feared that converts secured at these visits often were ready to embrace the Faith of the next visiting preacher.

Few religious faiths have been the object of propaganda in Scotland to the extent of Unitarianism. A list of places apart from those dealt with already, where lecture courses have been given for longer or shorter time includes places as far apart as Kirkwall in the Orkneys and Dumfries.

In Scotland a Unitarian Church Service differs little in form from that of the National Church. The Essex Hall Hymnal mainly is used and Biblical passages may be read from "A Golden Treasury of the Bible," an important Unitarian publication first issued in 1934 and edited by Mr. Rowe.

Like many other activities the termination of persecution and public attack has had the effect of returning the cause of Unitarianism in Scotland to comparative obscurity. Despite this, I can testify from personal knowledge to the well-informed mind and pleasant character of the typical Unitarian. To-day they do not live in the public eye as in bygone days, but the Scottish congregations, nevertheless, continue to give comfort and pleasure to those few who feel in the free religious atmosphere which prevails a mental peace and security.

